THANKSGIVING SERMON,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CHAMBERS,

NOVEMBER 24, 1859.

WITH A BRIEF

HISTORY

OF THE

First Independent Church,

(BROAD STREET,)

OF

PHILADELPHIA.

BY ONE OF ITS MEMBERS.

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SERMON.

[The speaker read, as introductory to his sermon, from 8th chapter of Deuteronomy, and the 2d chapter of 1st Timothy. Then, after prayer, he said:]

I have announced to you my purpose to relieve my heart of a burden that has long oppressed me. As an American citizen, an American Minister of the Gospel, I love this Bible; and the God of this Bible. My country, its Constitution and its laws, I love. As a man of peace I have a heart for the nation. From its extreme Northern verge to the utmost limits of its Southern boundary. I love it from the spot upon which falls the first ray of the morning sun, to that far-off West, where linger the last beams of the sun's evening retirement. From its centre to its circumference. I love it *as a unit.* I am ready to live by it as a unit; and am ready to put the blood of my heart

fresh upon its altar, rather than see it anything else than a unit.

The worth of this Union to ourselves and the world of mankind, is unutterably beyond price. No powers of arithmetic, no mathematical genius however cultivated, can figure out the intrinsic value of this Union to ourselves and to the race. The eyes of the civilized world are upon us to-day. Fixed and steady is that gaze that comes from every quarter of the globe; it seems just to linger, in its burning look, upon this galaxy of States. The nations of mankind are watching us with especial interest, because we are engaged in working out the great, the momentous problem of self-government. The finger of scorn has been pointed; the pen of the enemy of republics has been dipped long and deep, and has dashed rapidly across the page, declaring the impossibility of our success.

My opinion has been long fixed that the monarchies of Europe, and especially England, were jealous of us. It is possible that in this we may be mistaken; but the old adage, that "Actions speak more loudly than words," comes in to corroborate our sentiment. When small in size and

young in years, we escaped from under the oppressive dominion of that government; and in despite of her armies, her navy, her wealth, we moved on with the strength of an infant giant, and hurled from our necks, and shook from our hands, and burst from our feet, every chain and fetter of political bondage, and stood up as freemen—freemen before the Universe. The God of Justice crowned our efforts with success. Subsequently, insult added to injury roused the heart of this young giant, and brought us into renewed conflict with our former oppressor. That attempt, too, to crush us failed. Why did the first fail? Because the heart of our nation was infused with the spirit of the Bible and patriotic unity. Why did the second fail? Because our love of liberty and trust in God had increased, and the multiplied States of this Republic felt that they were bound together by hooks of eternal steel: as one man they met the enemy—they conquered, they triumphed. The invading foe, with fallen crest, was commanded to return to their own shores, and molest us no more.

This spirit of jealousy, we think, still exists; and the monarchies, the despotisms of Europe, are

checked to-day, because they see no hope of triumphing over this Western Continent in any other way than by breaking *us* to pieces. *They* cannot break us; but we *can* break ourselves. The combined armies and navies of the whole three Continents are not equal to the task of severing this Union, if we continue true to ourselves.

Seeing, then, no hope, other than by arraying us against ourselves, our adversaries seize hold of that whereby they may most readily engender strife—make us sectional—lift the heart from the great Ark of the Covenant of our Union, and put it down in a little spot here and a little spot there. Hence it is, that you find England, particularly, most officious in attempting to interfere with our institutions. Her press, her pulpits, her forum, her senate chamber, roll out anathemas upon us, and endeavor to lay the hand upon that which belongs *to* us, and with which their interference is nought but impertinence. And, as the Lord lives, if they are not careful, that arm will one day be smitten from the shoulder, for their officious intermeddling. We are a long-suffering people; but, brethren, there was a point at which we found en-

croachment unendurable, and there may be another. If we are capable of working out the great problem of self-government, we are capable of taking care of our own institutions, whatever they may be—commercial, agricultural, domestic, civil, religious—we are capable of taking care of our own institutions, and we must be let alone.

If, however, the enemies of republics can, by the utmost stretch of their cunning and their power, urge us on to a spirit of mutual jealousy, of anarchy, of confusion; if they can discover, (and they think they have discovered it,) the means by which an entering wedge of separation may be introduced between these States, now bound together by ten thousand ligaments, and cemented by oceans of holy and patriotic blood; if they can discover how they may divide and disrupt this Union, they will do it; and when it shall be done, they will put the iron heel of despotism upon the scattered fragments, as may suit their pleasure or their interest. But, O God! that day cannot come, that day will never come, if we be true to ourselves! I have no apprehensions from the malign influence of any power, unless it be seconded by our own folly.

Sometimes men tell us—"If we should have war with England, our enemies would burn Boston, and burn New York, and burn Philadelphia, and burn Baltimore, and burn every city on the Atlantic shore." I do not believe a word of it. We are not made of stuff to be thus burned. But we may burn ourselves. No other hand must grasp the helm of our noble ship, and drive her upon the quicksands or the rocks.

There are evils amongst us to which we must not be insensible.

In viewing the aspects of public morality in this country, one of the most alarming signs of the times, to my mind, is the utter indifference that seems to prevail with regard to the solemnity, value and importance of an oath. Every President, every Governor, every Judge, all the Mayors and Lawyers and Marshals and Justices of the Peace, all the Members of Congress, and of our respective State Legislatures, are sworn, solemnly before God, as they will answer at the Great Day, to stand by the Constitution and the laws of these United States. This is the oath that they take. It is no trifle—not intended to be a mere mockery

or form. The question is, now, is this oath complied with? All naturalized citizens—and I want this heard, I want it understood—all naturalized citizens are, if possible, more solemnly bound to the Constitution and laws of the United States by oath, than either the President, the Governor, the Judge, the Lawyer or the Magistrate. For the man that comes to this country from abroad and is naturalized, first solemnly renounces allegiance to the government under which he was born, declares his abandonment of that government, and then swears or affirms, before the Great I AM, that he will maintain the Constitution and laws of the United States.

I ask, then, are our official men faithful to their oaths? Are our naturalized citizens faithful to *their* oaths? They swear to stand by the Constitution and laws of the United States. What do the Constitution and the laws require? It is your business and it is your duty to know. If, as an adopted citizen of this Republic, you have not examined that Constitution and those laws, you are bound to examine them, that you may know what those laws teach, and what are your duties in re-

gard to them. The Constitution is the compact. It does not belong to the North nor to the South, to the East nor to the West. It is the covenant, my brethren, between the States of this Union; and while that Constitution remains as it is, and what it is, you are bound by it.

You may possibly say to me, "But, I am native-born; I never took this oath of fidelity to the Constitution and the laws." But, my brother, your birthright holds you to that Constitution as solemnly as the oath which binds the adopted citizen. You are born under its obligations. Being born here, you are bound to obey the Constitution and the laws. No man has a right to set them aside.

Now, for example, the Constitution most positively and absolutely—in the plainest and most unmistakable manner—provides that a fugitive from labor, escaping from one State into another, shall be delivered up. This is the Constitution. I am not to-day touching slavery, right or wrong. I am looking, as a practical man, at things as they are. This is the provision of the Constitution. If, then, the President or Governor, the Judge, the Lawyer, or the Magistrate, the citizen, (native-born

or adopted,) does not comply with that provision, when it is within his jurisdiction to do so,—if he connives at its evasion, if he aids or abets the fugitive in his flight, he is before heaven a perjured man, and the waters of the ocean could not wash out the stain.

With regard to the fugitive-slave law, it is not my purpose to say whether that is a right law or a wrong law. But it is the law of the land. It was constitutionally enacted, and its binding character it is disloyalty to question. It became a law. Every public officer is by oath bound to obey it. Every adopted citizen is, by his solemn oath, made when he received the rights and privileges of an American citizen, bound to obey it. Every native-born citizen is bound by his birthright to obey it. If the Constitution is wrong, the people, who made the Constitution, have the right and the power, acting through the legitimate channels, to alter it. If the fugitive-slave law is wrong, with the people rests the law-making power; and, thank God, they have the right, acting through their representatives, to repeal that or any other law. But no individual man has a

right to ignore that law; while it is the law, you and I, and all the citizens of this country, are bound by it. If, therefore, we, as President, or Judge, or Lawyer, or Magistrate, or naturalized citizen, aid or abet, countenance or encourage the violation of that law, or wink at its evasion, we are perjured. To contradict this is the acme of folly and turpitude. If it be not so, law is worthless, and an oath is a bagatelle. Unless an oath is to have some solemnity and obligation—unless the Constitution and the laws are to have some binding force—we may as well throw our blood-sealed charter to the winds.

After these general prefatory remarks, I now take up that question of questions—"Can this Union be perpetuated?" I answer, yes! Take the Bible for our rule and guide. Let it be the sheet-anchor of our hope. Under its influence let our gallant and noble Ship of State be carefully watched and guarded, and no fear of peril need be entertained. The winds may blow, the political sea may rage, the wrathful waves may mount, the political heavens may gather blackness, the lightnings may flash, and the thunderbolts may be

dashed down; but, I tell you, my brethren, if this Bible be followed, strictly, prayerfully, earnestly, no storm that earth or hell may raise, no tempest that crowned heads or despotic sceptres can invoke, will ever throw our ship upon the lee-shore, or put out the light of this American Union.

In considering the means by which this Republic is to be preserved, I would remark, in the first place, that government is of Divine appointment. If we turn to the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we shall find this question definitely and absolutely settled. We there read: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," (the civil authorities.) "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." God has appointed civil government. I do not say that God has given us absolutely any specific form of government. I do say—I fearlessly say—that the men who claim the Divine right of kings claim a right which God gave in His wrath. God did give a king to Israel; but God gave him in His wrath. That, however, is merely by the way.

In a government of the people the laws, under God, are of their own enactment. We are subject

to a Constitution ordained by ourselves. The formation of that Constitution was an object of long solicitude to wise heads and noble hearts. You remember that those large-minded patriots, in the Constitutional Convention, expended upon their task months of anxious thought and consultation; yet a satisfactory issue seemed still far-distant; no daylight appeared to break upon them. Then, Franklin—though he has been suspected of rather skeptical views on the subject of religion—made his grand proposition. He rose and said that the Convention had been laboring in the dark, trying to get along alone; he desired that they should get some light from God, and proposed that prayer should be offered. The proposition was adopted; and, if I recollect aright, in three days after that, the Constitution of the United States was completed and signed.

The next point I would notice is the duty that all men owe to the government. Every citizen of our country, whether an official man or unofficial, whether native-born or adopted, owes allegiance to the Constitution and laws of the United States, as he does also to the Constitution and laws of his

respective State and to the municipal authorities. In this great compact as citizens, we are bound. Obedience to the legal authorities is not a mere matter of option. We may not say, "I will do as I please; I will obey or not obey, as suits my wishes or my convenience." You are bound, my brethren. The official man is bound by his oath; the adopted citizen is bound by his oath; the native-born citizen is bound by his immutable birthright.

What are the teachings of the Bible as to the duty which all men owe to the government? The great Teacher, the grand Reformer, the mighty Missionary from the skies, who made Judea's hills resound with the eloquence of his sentiments and the divinity of his doctrine, was, on one occasion, applied to by some persons who were anxious to ensnare him. "Is it lawful," said they, "to give tribute to Cesar?" Jesus was living under Cesar's government; Jesus was amenable to Cesar's laws. Had the Son of God answered "No," instantly the charge of treason would have been brought against him. "But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, 'Why tempt ye me?

Bring me a penny that I may see it.' And they brought it. And he said unto them, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' and they said unto him, 'Cesar's.'" What, then, did Jesus say? Did he say, "Never mind Cesar; Cesar is a tyrant; his laws are not worthy of obedience; pay or not pay, as you like; and if they attempt to force you to pay, then fight?" Did Jesus say that? Not a word of it. "Jesus, answering, said unto them, 'Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'"

In the teachings of Jesus Christ, there is, you perceive, no interference with the civil institutions of the land—no attempt to excite the people to riot or bloodshed. Christ says, in effect, "Go, meet the claims of the Government; you may not like it, but you are under it, and you are bound to it."

The Constitution and laws of this country are made by ourselves. We may not be entirely satisfied with them; if so, there is a legitimate and orderly mode by which they can be altered. The adopted citizen has no right to complain if our

Constitution and laws do not suit him. He came to this country of his own choice; he voluntarily went before the authorities, and, laying his hand upon this glorious Book of God, pressing it also to his lips as an evidence of fidelity, he took a solemn oath that he would obey the Constitution and laws of the United States, or he solemnly affirmed that he would do so. Did he not assume this obligation voluntarily? Has he any right to interfere in opposition to our Constitution and laws? Does he say, "I do not like your Constitution?" Then, sir, pack up and go home; the sooner we are rid of you the better. We do not ask you to come here; and if you have come here to find fault with our institutions and our laws, go home, where you think you have better.

It is not a matter of option whether we shall be loyal to the government. The Constitution and laws of this country are our Cesar; and on us rests the solemn duty of obedience.

In the 7th verse of the 13th chapter of Romans, we have this injunction: "Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear;

honor to whom honor." This is the duty of the American citizen. The performance of this duty is one of the methods by which we are to keep together these States in one magnificent brotherhood, an object of universal admiration.

In this Bible, our guide toward the practical duties of life, without the performance of which we cannot be good citizens, we have also presented to us the duty of husband and wife. I need not detain you by referring to the passages of Scripture; you will find them in Ephesians, 6: 5, 9, and in Colossians, 3: 18, 19, and First Peter, the third chapter. The husband is enjoined to treat with deference and honor the woman of his choice. If he fails to do this, he is recreant to every principle of manly honor; but he is no viler, after all, than that perjured Governor, or perjured Judge, or perjured Lawyer, or perjured Magistrate, or perjured adopted citizen, who will assist in the violation of the Constitution and laws of the country.

We have also here distinctly pointed out the relative duties of parents and children. I regret that my time does not allow me to dwell on these points. The duty of the child to obey the parent

is stated in the most absolute terms: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." (Ephesians, 6: 1.) Parents are commanded to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The parent that is guided by this Bible will teach his child fidelity to God, fidelity to his country, fidelity to the Constitution and the laws. The Christian parent will teach his child to respect the magistracy, not to abuse or vilify them. Why, you may see little urchins, eight or ten years of age, running about your streets—oftentimes in rags and filth, at other times clad in the habiliments of gentlemen's sons—reviling your President, denouncing your Governors, and ridiculing your laws. Has such a child been brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Has he been trained in accordance with the principles of this gospel? No. But, if our institutions are to be kept from peril, the parent or the guardian, the father and the mother must instruct their children in the principles of the Bible—honor, integrity, patriotism—love of country and love of the race—proper subordination to the authorities constituted by God. Do not set your

children an evil example; do not influence them with passion, and darken their minds with prejudice; do not bring them up to hate their fellows; but subject them to the blessed influences of this Gospel.

It is only necessary that we follow the instructions of the Bible. As I believe in the existence of a God, I believe that this Book—whatever it may be to other people and to other nations—I believe that this open, free, untrammeled Bible is, as I have said, the sheet-anchor of my blessed country. I have no other confidence in which I can repose.

Again, we have the duties of master and servant clearly set forth. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And ye masters, do the same unto them,

forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him."

This, remember, is the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

There is no State in this nation, there is no county in this nation, there is no town in this nation, there is no township in this nation, where I would not stand up as God Almighty's minister, and preach these doctrines of His gospel, whether men would hear or forbear. I would preach the duties of the master, just as I would those of the parent, or the husband, or the wife. I would say, "Sir, you are bound, by the God who made you, to treat that servant kindly and honorably, and provide faithfully for his needs." The master is bound by the very same Gospel that binds the servant. I do not go into the question as to the legality, the moral right, the religious right, of these relations. I say these things are here; these things existed in the days of Jesus Christ, and we must treat them as He did. Whatever is wrong, this Gospel will correct. If we carry out its great doctrines we shall have peace.

Are we all conscientiously impressed with this sacred obligation to obey the Constitution and the laws? We must remember that if we disregard this obligation, we become guilty before God and man. If any citizen directly or indirectly violates the Constitution and the laws, whether by his own act or by abetting others, he is in such proportion destroying his title to good citizenship, and he is a perjured man.

What man, in this house to-day, what man belonging to these United States—(and may the time never come when any mortal on the footstool of God Almighty shall be able to say anything else than *these* United States)—what man in this nation, whether he be a native or an adopted citizen, is willing to see this Union dissolved. You may say there is no danger. I tell you, my brethren, there is danger, unless our people come up to the great duty of obeying God, of "rendering to Cesar the things that are Cesar's"—unless our pulpits cease their clamor against the Constitution and the laws—unless the Ministers of God feel their obligation as others to obey the Constitution and laws of our country—regard their obligations to

teach the people their duty of fidelity to Cesar and fidelity to God—unless they cease their clamors for the higher law (as they call it) of instinct, and preach God's revealed Word, and cease, too, to preach from the altar that it is better to put into a man's hand a rifle, a death weapon, rather than a mother's Bible—unless we cease the agitation and abuse that arrays State against State—unless we abandon all sectionalism, and resolve that we will adhere to the Constitution and the laws, reforming that Constitution and those laws, when necessary, by legitimate and orderly methods. If we move on in this way our Republic will remain.

If there is any man who would wish to see this nation severed, who would tear into fragments that banner of stripes and stars, and pluck the feathers from the proud eagle of my country, let him fall crushed and mangled before a gazing, a laughing, a blaspheming world of crowns and despotic sceptres. I say to-day, before the Eternal I AM, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, (and if I were on the banks of the Potomac, standing by that vault at Mount Vernon, I would

say it over the sacred dust of the immortal Washington,) the man that would labor or would wish for the dissolution of the American Union, let him be *anathema maran-atha!*

HISTORY

OF THE

FIRST INDEPENDENT CHURCH,

(BROAD STREET,)

OF

PHILADELPHIA.

In the month of March, 1825, the Ninth Presbyterian Church, worshipping in the house on Thirteenth Street, North of Market, invited Mr. John Chambers, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Baltimore, to preach as a candidate. Mr. Chambers accepted the invitation, and supplied the pulpit two Sabbaths in April. A meeting of the congregation was called the last week in the same month, and a call made out for Mr. Chambers; and in the early part of May the call was forwarded to him at Baltimore; and after much prayer and consultation with his Pastor and friend, Mr. Duncan, the call was accepted; and

on the second Sabbath in May, 1825, he entered upon his duties as Pastor of the Ninth Presbyterian Church.

The history of the house in which the Church was then worshipping is of too much moment to be passed by without special notice. This house of worship was built in pursuance of the will of Mrs. Margaret Duncan, grandmother of the late John Mason Duncan, of Baltimore, Maryland.

The vessel in which Mrs. Duncan came a passenger from Ireland, her native land, was overtaken by a violent storm, which lasted for several days, until the captain and crew gave up in despair, and so announced to the ship's company. Mrs. Duncan, being preëminently a woman of God, went, in the midst of the howling tempest and wild wailings of the passengers and crew, in faith to the God of the winds and waves, and invoked His gracious interposition and protection. At the same time, while bowed before the God of the Covenant, amid the fearful scenes of despair which surrounded her, Mrs. Duncan entered into covenant with God, that if He would abate the storm, and carry the ship's company safe to land, she would

cause to be erected a house of worship to His honor and glory.

God heard her prayer—the ship was brought safe into harbor, with her crew and passengers. Mrs. Duncan fulfilled her vow by the erection of the house of worship on Thirteenth above Market Street. The above named house and lot have, by an Act of the Legislature, been sold. The old house is demolished, and on its site is at present laid the foundation of buildings for business purposes.

As above stated, it was in that house, erected in fidelity to her vow by Mrs. Duncan, that the Ninth Church worshipped when Mr. Chambers was called.

Mr. Chambers had been licensed by the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, in May, 1824. This Presbytery formerly belonged to the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, and after the union between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, the Presbytery retained its original organization till the fall of 1824, when it was dissolved, and the ministers

and licentiates united with the Presbyteries most convenient to their respective localities. Mr. Chambers was received as a licentiate under the care of the Presbytery of Baltimore, where he was at the time the call came from the Ninth Church in Philadelphia. The Church, when Mr. Chambers took charge of it, was small—the number of communicants only between seventy and eighty. There were then three elders, Messrs. Ross, Hogg and Reed. There was neither Sabbath School nor prayer-meeting in connection with the Church at that time.

The Church was under the care of the First Presbytery of Philadelphia. In the month of October, 1825, this Presbytery held its semi-annual meeting in Newtown, Bucks county, Pa. At that time Mr. Chambers appeared before the Presbytery, with clean papers from the Presbytery of Baltimore, that he might be taken under the care of the First Presbytery of Philadelphia, with a view to ordination and installation as Pastor of the Ninth Church. But when the papers were presented, an objection was started. Rumor had circulated the report that Mr. Chambers was a

heretic, because, from conscientious scruples, he had refused to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith, believing, as he did, the Bible to be all-sufficient as a rule of faith and practice; and the more confirmed was he in this view, as the Confession of Faith itself, and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, teach that the *Bible* is the *only* infallible rule of faith and obedience; and, as Mr. Chambers believed that nothing could exceed *infallibility*, he was satisfied with the infallible rule. It was then proposed by the Rev. Dr. Ely, that the Moderator should ask Mr. Chambers whether, at the time of his licensure, he subscribed to the Confession of Faith. Mr. Chambers replied that he did not. A second question—"Are you prepared to do so now?" "I am not."

It was then moved by Dr. Ely, that Mr. Chambers and his papers be referred back to the Presbytery of Baltimore, and that the pulpit of the Ninth Church be declared vacant; and that the Rev. Messrs. Patterson and Hoff be a committee to perform that duty.

Accordingly, the Thursday evening of that week, being the regular evening for the weekly

lecture, the Committee appeared at the Church. It had been noised about all the day before, that the Committee from the Presbytery would be there, consequently there was a large attendance and much excitement. Some of the congregation had resolved to put the Committee quietly into the street, should they attempt to go into the pulpit. At this time there was much religious interest in the Church. At the hour of opening service Mr. Chambers arrived, and found the Committee in waiting. He told them what the consequences would be, if they attempted to fulfil their mission. The committee, being men of God and full of piety, at the request of Mr. Chambers, went with him into the pulpit, and assisted in conducting the religious services of the evening. Good was done, and not a word said about vacating the pulpit.

The week following, which was the third in October, 1825, Mr. Chambers went to Baltimore to meet the Presbytery. They met, and declared Mr. Chambers no longer a licentiate under their care, and handed him back his papers. In the meantime, the congregation, after due notice, held a meeting, and by a vote of four to one, declared

themselves independent of *all* Church courts; anp by an equally large vote, resolved to retain Mr. Chambers as their Minister. A small party went off, headed by Mr. Moses Reed, one of the elders, and organized in a room on Race Street, as the Ninth Presbyterian Church. Mr. Chambers, in the meantime, returned from Baltimore, and was received with open arms and warm hearts by the people.

The question then arose, how is Mr. Chambers to be ordained? He had been thrown upon the wide world, fatherless and friendless, ecclesiastically. At that time, the Rev. James P. Wilson, D. D., Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, who was one of the best friends Mr. Chambers ever had, the Rev. Thomas H. Skinner, D. D., Pastor of the Fifth Presbyterian Church, on Arch Street above Tenth, and the Rev. John M. Duncan, of Baltimore, the Pastor and tutor of Mr. Chambers, and who had been more than a father to him, advised Mr. Chambers' going to New Haven, Connecticut, and gave him letters of introduction to the Rev. Drs. Taylor, Bacon and others.

Mr. Chambers repaired to New Haven in the month of December, 1825, handed in his letters, and two days after, the Association of Congregational Ministers of the Western District of New Haven county, was called together in what is called the Middle Church. Professor Fitch, of Yale College, preached the ordination sermon, after which Mr. Chambers was ordained by the laying on of hands by the Association.

The next day Mr. Chambers returned to Philadelphia, and on the first Sabbath in January, 1826, administered the ordinance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper for the first time. It was a happy day; fifty or sixty were added to the Church at that time. From that period the congregation increased in numbers; a Sabbath School was commenced early in the year 1826; prayer meetings were also opened and largely attended; additions were made to the Church on each communion occasion. The congregation, when Mr. Chambers took charge of it, did not exceed two hundred. Sixty communicants remained with the congregation after the declaration of independence. At that time there was not a man to lead in public

prayer, so that when the prayer meetings were first commenced, Mr. Chambers had to borrow two brethren from a Presbyterian Church to help him. It was not long, however, before the Lord opened the mouths of several brethren of the Church, who became most efficient aids, and from that day to this the Pastor has been nobly sustained.

In the spring of 1830, at a meeting of the congregation, it was resolved to build a new house of worship. The lot on the North-East corner of Broad and George Streets was selected. The people came up to the work nobly, and subscribed liberally. In March of that year the corner-stone was laid, and in June, 1831, the new house was opened for religious worship. The Rev. John M. Duncan, of Baltimore, preached in the morning and evening, and the Rev. James Arbuckle, of Philadelphia, preached in the afternoon. The house was crowded to excess all day, and from that time to the present there has been an unbroken stream of prosperity and peace to the Church.

When the congregation first took independent ground, it was confidently predicted on all hands, and that too by Ministers of the Gospel, that two

or three years would find them scattered to the winds; and the foundation upon which these predictions were based was, that the Church had no Creed. The idea of succeeding in building up a Church with the *Bible alone*, as a rule of faith and practice, was scoffed at, and that too by *Protestant Ministers*. But an experience of more than three and thirty years, has not only convinced the First Independent Church of Philadelphia, but also the community at large, of the Divine sufficiency of the Bible as a rule of faith and practice, and not only so, but also a bond of union holding together a large and flourishing congregation in Christian love and harmony.

From the time of the establishment of the Church until the present time, the Rev. John Chambers has continued its faithful Pastor, and never was there a people more ardently and justly attached to their Minister than the congregation of this Church.

Its first elders were Messrs. Ross and Hogg. Matthew Arrison and Thomas Hibbert were added about the year 1827. At subsequent periods, Messrs. Jacob P. Broom, Robert Luther, Aaron

H. Burtis, John Yard, Jr., Robert Buist and Francis Newland were elected and ordained to the same office.

Of the above, Messrs. Ross, Hogg, Hibbert, Broom and Arrison have gone to their reward, and in December, 1852, Robert Buist removed from the City and withdrew from the eldership. In May, 1857, Daniel Steinmetz and Rudolph S. Walton were elected and ordained elders. The eldership at present consists of:

REV. JOHN CHAMBERS, *Pastor.*	
ROBERT LUTHER,	FRANCIS NEWLAND,
AARON H. BURTIS,	DANIEL STEINMETZ,
JOHN YARD, JR.,	RUDOLPH S. WALTON.

Thirty-four years have passed away since that little flock of sixty-two assembled for the first time in the capacity of an Independent Church, to commemorate the death of their Lord and Saviour, and from that time an unceasing tide of prosperity has flowed down upon the Church. At each communion season the ranks of that little company were swelled by new recruits, and a mighty host are

now enrolled upon the books of the Church militant, whose names we trust are also on record in the Lamb's Book of Life. Two thousand eight hundred and fifty-one precious souls have been admitted to the Church from the time of its organization up to January 1, 1860.

By reason of removals, dismissals and deaths, the membership has been reduced to about twelve hundred, who are still dwelling in the old homestead where they were born into the kingdom of the Lord.

The Church building is a neat and handsome structure of the Grecian-Ionic order of architecture, located at the North-East corner of Broad and George Streets, (recently changed to Sansom,) fronting on Broad Street seventy-six feet, with a depth of one hundred feet on Sansom Street. The large edifice, erected in 1831, though fully able to accommodate the congregation in the earlier part of its history, in latter years became "too strait," and according to a resolution passed at the annual meeting in April, 1853, it was enlarged by an extension of the East end of fifteen feet, and the erection of a portico in front. By this means

fifty-four additional pews were added to the audienee ehamber, and material improvements were made in the basement, whieh now eontains a fine leeture room, infant sehool rooms, eommittee, Bible elass and library rooms.

The whole number of pews is two hundred and forty-two, and the Chureh is estimated to eomfortably seat one thousand five hundred persons. It is not unusual, however, for it to aeeommodate as many as twenty-five hundred persons.

The total eost of the improvement was nearly $15,000, whieh, with the former debt of the Chureh, is all paid, exeepting about $3,000. This small balanee is now being paid off very rapidly; and we shall speedily rejoiee in our house of worship entirely free from debt. Thanks be unto God!

Seenes of glory and of God are the eommunion seasons of the Chureh, whieh take plaee on the last Sabbaths in Mareh, June, September and Deeember. All the lower part of the spaeious Chureh is reserved for and oeeupied by the eommunieants, and oftimes the aisles besides are thronged even to the pulpit stairs. The following extraet from the *Christian Observer*, of this City,

refers to the communion of June, 1858, and is a truthful picture of these hallowed scenes.

"Last Sabbath was a memorable day in the history of the First Independent Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia. The prayer-meeting and services of the morning were very numerously attended.—Many hearts were revived and impressed, as if listening to a voice from Heaven, proclaiming the word of life.

"At half past three o'clock the Church assembled to commemorate the dying love of their Lord and Saviour around His table, and to receive a large accession from those who have recently put their trust in Christ as their Redeemer. Notwithstanding the heat, which was very oppressive, the house was thronged. The lower part of it, even to the pulpit stairs, was densely filled with communicants. The galleries were full, and many were seated on the stairs leading to the galleries, and others were standing in the portico.

"The services were introduced by the Rev. Mr. Chambers, Pastor of the church, who gave out an appropriate hymn of praise, which was sung with spirit by the immense congregation. He then

offered prayer and gave thanks over the symbols of the body of Christ broken, and his blood shed, for the remission of sins. This service was followed by the publie reception of *seventy* new members of the Church, to twenty-seven of whom the Pastor administered the ordinance of baptism. The Charges he gave them severally, as he baptised them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, were various, seriptural, appropriate—words of hallowed eounsel, touching the great end of life, never to be forgotten. As the seventy stood before that immense audienee, professing their faith in Christ, their ever-living, reigning Saviour, and as the Pastor addressed them and the large assembly of eommunieants in words of life and truth, in whieh all seemed to feel a living interest, the seene was solemn, grand and glorious. We were ready to exclaim—'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' The bread and the wine were then distributed to the thousand or twelve hundred eommunicants, oeeupying nearly an hour. The Chureh was then briefly addressed by Dr. Converse, and again by the Pastor, re-

minding them that as a Church they were not their own; they had been bought with a price; redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; and that it is only by *living near to Christ*, that they can accomplish the blessed purposes of their redemption, find peace and joy amid the sorrows, trials, and conflicts of life, and come off as conquerors, and more than conquerors, through the grace and strength of their great Leader. Another hymn of joyful praise, welcoming the new members, was sung by the Church; a short season was spent in silent prayer, when the exercises were closed with the benediction. The services were continued nearly two hours—the heat of the atmosphere very oppressive—yet such was the interest of the occasion that no impatience was manifested. Of the seventy added, sixty-seven were received on examination and three by letter. At the preceding communion, on the last Sabbath in March, thirty-seven were added; making one hundred and seven since last February.

"This Church has been an efficient auxiliary, coöperating with our Churches in missionary labors and other works of Christian beneficence."

The Sabbath School, long under the efficient Superintendence of Mr. A. H. Burtis, is in a very flourishing condition, numbering two hundred and seventy-six scholars, and thirty-eight teachers. An Infant School is also sustained with great interest, having a regular attendance of sixty scholars, and fourteen teachers. In connection with the Schools there are also three male and female Bible Classes, all of which are of the most interesting character.

The evidence of the prosperity of these "nurseries for the Lord," is in the fact that at every communion season it is our happy privilege to welcome into the membership of the Church some of the youth belonging to the Schools or Bible Classes.

The Youth's Temperance Society, attached to the Schools, was organized about the year 1840, and has been instrumental in enlisting the youth of the Church under the banner of temperance, and preparing them for active labor in this cause, of which the Pastor of the Church has ever been a warm and earnest advocate. Thousands of boys and girls have grown up under the influences of this Society, and gone forth to battle against the

use of intoxicating liquors. And one of the most delightful occasions of the year, is the anniversary of the Society, usually held on the 22d of February, in Concert Hall.

It has ever been a cherished plan of the Pastor to train up the youth of the congregation for active usefulness, and his labors in this respect have been eminently successful. Although between fifteen and twenty of the young men have entered the Gospel Ministry, and a large number removed in various ways, yet at the present time there are over *eighty* young men in the Church, most of whom are actively engaged in the work of the Lord, not only in the Church but elsewhere; in the various union movements of the day, they are earnestly laboring for the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

Especially worthy of notice is the Sabbath Evening Prayer Meeting, established by the young men about four years ago, and regularly sustained by their efforts; it is one of the most interesting meetings of the Church. The lecture room is generally crowded, and frequently the adjoining rooms. The young men have the entire charge of

the meeting, and their labors have been rewarded with abundant blessings. Very many of those who have of late years entered the Church, date their first religious impressions to these precious Sabbath evening services.

There has been in active operation for the past twenty-seven years, in connection with the Church, a Missionary Society, which has done efficient service towards the building up of the kingdom of our Lord—confining itself to no particular field of labor, it has scattered its blessings far and wide, over every portion of our land, and also in foreign lands the "glad tidings of great joy" have been carried to the perishing millions of the heathen world. As a practical result of the missionary spirit of our people, we refer, however, with peculiar pleasure and unfeigned gratitude to God, to the Mission School recently established by our congregation. Its history being full of interest we give it in detail.

The utter desecration of the Sabbath by the young men and youth of the South-Western section of the City, had long been a noted fact, and with a view of gathering in from the streets and fields, these

Sabbath wanderers, and of bringing them under the peaceful influences of Christian instruction, it was determined to organize there a Sabbath School. Accordingly two rooms in the second story of the dwelling house No. 2135 South Street, were rented, and on the second Sabbath of February, (Feb. 14th,) 1858, a School was commenced with twenty-seven children and two adults. The circumstances under which this first meeting was held will doubtless never be forgotten by those who were present. No seats having been provided, the children were standing in a row around the room, when Mr. Kincaid, the owner of the house, entered and said, he "was sorry he had no benches to give us, but there was some pieces of scantling in the cellar to the use of which we were welcome." His kind offer was gladly accepted, and the rough boards were brought up and arranged on bricks in the centre of the room in such a way as to form a square, and thus the children sat and sang their first Sabbath School hymn.

From the very beginning of the School the blessing of Providence seemed to rest upon the enterprise, and a deep interest was taken in it through-

out the entire district. Each Sabbath the number of scholars continued to increase, and it was soon found necessary to procure an additional room; but even with enlarged accommodations the place was too strait for us, and it became a serious question what should be done with the children that were flocking to our rooms and thronging our stairways. Larger rooms were sought for, but without success. At this time, however, the way seemed to open up in this wise: the suggestion was made to erect a Tent on an adjoining lot. After much consideration we felt convinced that it was our only course to pursue, and accordingly the use of the large lot on the North side of South Street, and West of Twenty-First, was applied for and cheerfully given by R. Dunning, Esq., the owner, and we set about building our canvas house. The first thing to be done was to level the lot and to erect a board fence around it. This was soon done by the larger boys of the school and friends of the Mission in the neighborhood. Within this enclosure we pitched our Tabernacle. Its roof and sides were built of an old ship-sail, hired from one of the ship riggers on the Delaware. It was

perfectly water-proof, and through the kindness of some friends, we were enabled to make it pleasant and attractive in every respect, and accommodations were provided sufficient to comfortably seat about five hundred persons. Humble though all this was, yet the God of the Tabernacle of old honored it by His presence, and His glory shone upon it even as on that of the children of Israel.

On the 18th of July, the Tent was first opened for religious service. The Rev. Dr. Challen preached an appropriate discourse in the morning; and in the afternoon over three hundred children, with many of their parents, assembled in the new School room, and sweetly did their voices join in the songs of praise that rang out and reëchoed through the streets and alleys around about our Tabernacle. It was a precious season, a blessed earnest of better things to come; but the evening service was one never to be forgotten. Towards evening, the people, as though moved by one common impulse, began to gather in and around the tent. Men came leaning upon the staff of age; aged women, tottering upon the brink of the grave; mothers with children in their

arms, and leading others beside them; young men and maidens—all, eagerly, were flocking to the Canvas Church. And that old pulpit, so long in use in the lecture room of the Church at Broad and Sansom streets, but laid aside since the alterations there, once more occupied an appropriate place, and again the faithful minister of God proclaimed from it the message of the gospel. Oh! those were scenes of thrilling interest. The multitude would gather beneath the canvas roof, and around the sides of the tent, and crowd even the streets about the enclosure, and gladly listen to the word of life. Verily, the poor had the gospel preached to them, as in olden time. Every Sabbath afternoon the children were gathered together, and taught to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Every Sabbath evening there was preaching, and almost every night of the week there was either preaching or a prayer meeting.

Thus, from the 18th of July to October 17th, when the tent was closed, there were fifty-one religious services in our humble tent—resulting, we have every reason to believe, in the honor and glory of God.

About the first of August, a movement was made by the friends of the Mission, to provide permanent accommodations for the School. It seemed to meet with general favor, and such was the practical sympathy extended that it was at once resolved to proceed with the erection of a building. The lot on which the tent stood was selected as the most suitable site, and a portion of it (fifty feet front by seventy deep) was purchased on ground rent, and the corner stone of a building for the Bethany Mission was laid on the 18th of October, 1858. From one of the daily papers we quote the following account of the laying of the corner stone:

"The services of the occasion opened with singing and the reading of the 84th Psalm, after which prayer was offered by Rev. R. A. Carden. The origin and history of this new place of worship was then read by the Superintendent, Mr. John Wanamaker. Addresses were delivered by Rev. Dr. Leyburn, Rev. Dr. Brainerd, Rev. John Chambers, and the Rev. Mr. McLeod. These gentlemen spoke earnestly of the necessity of a Church in this neighborhood, and thought this work was but

the commencement in a new field of labor where success will soon crown the effort. They desire that all shall come and worship there, that it shall be free and independent—open for all of every denomination. Rev. John Chambers, who was the officiating clergyman, and who performed the ceremony of laying the corner stone, spoke at much length, and expressed his sincere gratitude at being present on such an occasion, for it was one which he thought peculiarly adapted for religious rejoicing among those who desired to see the gospel promulgated.

"The following were the articles deposited in the box:—Charter of Bethany Mission, with names of Board of Trustees, Building Committee, Superintendent of Building, Superintendent of School and Teachers, President and Cabinet of the United States, Judges of Supreme Court of United States, Governor of State and Mayor of City; Charter of First Independent Church, Broad and George Streets, Constitution and By-laws of Missionary Society of First Independent Church; copies of all religious papers of different denominations, Sabbath School papers, Missionary journals, and

Minutes of Presbyterian General Assembly; copies of all the daily papers; Constitution and By-laws of the Young Men's Christian Association; copy of Union Prayer Meeting Hymns; publications of the Sunday School Union; Thirty-fourth Annual Report of Sunday School Union; publications of Tract Society, do. Presbyterian Board, do. Episcopal Board, and copy of *Presbyterian Quarterly Review.*

"The benediction was then given by the Rev. Dr. Beattie, of the Episcopal denomination, after which the audience separated."

During the fall and winter a neat and substantial building, forty by sixty feet, was erected and furnished at a cost of about thirty-seven hundred dollars. Whilst the house was being built, the Sabbath School was held *every* Sabbath, once in the depot of the Passenger Railway, and thereafter, until the building was ready for occupancy, in the Public School House, on Twenty-Third Street above Lombard, the use of which was kindly given by the Directors.

The Bethany Mission Chapel was dedicated on the 27th of January, 1859, with appropriate religious services, conducted by the Pastor of the

Church, Rev. Mr. Chambers, and participated in by Revs. Dr. Leyburn, Crowell, Cookman and others.

The Sabbath School met for the first time in its new home on the 30th of January, 1859, and was fully organized on the 20th of February, with two hundred and thirty-four scholars, and seventeen teachers. Since that time it has been gradually increasing in numbers and interest, and there are now enrolled two hundred and eighty children and thirty-five teachers.

Two of our beloved teachers, Miss Jane Province and Mr. William Calhoun, have gone to their reward. Both were earnest and efficient laborers in the Master's vineyard. The former was the first fruits of our mission labors; she was the *first* person of that neighborhood to whom we spoke about the school; the *first* one to volunteer her services as a teacher; the first one of our little flock that gave her heart to the Saviour; and the first of our number called away to dwell with Him in heaven. The memories of these departed ones are precious to our souls, and we can truly say of them—"they rest from their labors, but their works do follow them."

During the two years now nearly past, since we entered this field of labor, many precious souls have been brought into the Church, through the humble instrumentalities which God has so kindly blest. Seventeen persons have united with the First Independent Church, who are gleanings from our mission field, and a number of others have been led into a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ, who have joined themselves to other branches of the family of the Saviour. At this time there is a deep interest among the attendants upon the various services, and a goodly number earnestly inquiring the way of salvation.

Very many of the old people, who have come to this country from Scotland and Ireland, were members of the Church in their native land; but here, amid new scenes, and surrounded by different circumstances, they have wandered from God. But, blessed be His name, many are returning to the Father's house, like the Prodigal of old. It is an interesting fact, that seventy-six persons have arisen in our meetings and asked the people of God to pray for them, and hundreds have been personally conversed with about their souls.

Some of these are now waiting to join the Church, and others are deferring it until a Church shall have been organized at Bethany.

Though we rejoice and thank God for what has been done, yet the usefulness of this enterprise could be extended *ten-fold*, if the services of some faithful missionary could be obtained, to devote his whole time to go from house to house, and respond to the numberless calls that are made upon us to visit the sick, dying, and others, who are asking for personal conversation about their eternal welfare.

Our earnest prayer is, that God will speedily raise up the means to carry on more extensively this mission work.

In concluding this brief sketch of the Mission School, in view of all that has been accomplished there, we lift up our hearts in grateful praise to God, and to His great name ascribe all the honor and all the glory.

Having now briefly given an outline of the early history of the Church, its progress and present condition, and also an account of the various operations in which it is engaged, we close for the

present our hasty sketch, offering up an earnest prayer that all who read it may be encouraged to renewed diligence, and more devoted effort in the work of the Lord.

SERVICES

OF THE

FIRST INDEPENDENT CHURCH.

PREACHING, at 10½ A. M.
" " 3½ P. M. During Summer months, at 4 P. M.
COMMUNION, the last Sabbath afternoons in March, June, September and December, commencing at 3½ o'clock.
LECTURE, every Wednesday evening.
PRAYER MEETING, every Friday evening.
YOUNG MEN'S PRAYER MEETING, every Sabbath evening.
HOUR OF EVENING MEETINGS, { During Winter months, 7½ o'clock. " Summer " 8 "

SABBATH SCHOOLS.

MORNING SESSION, 9 o'clock. | AFTERNOON SESSION, 2½ o'clock.

MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

MONTHLY MEETING, in the Lecture Room, on the 2d Sabbath of every month, at 2 o'clock.
BUSINESS MEETING, the Wednesday evening after the 2d Sabbath.

ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE CONGREGATION, on the last Monday night in April.

BETHANY MISSION.

PREACHING, every Sabbath evening, at 7½ o'clock.
PRAYER MEETING, every Thursday evening, at 7½ o'clock.
SABBATH SCHOOL—Morning, at ¼ to 9 o'clock: Afternoon, 2 o'clock.

CHILDREN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

MONTHLY MEETING, on the first Sabbath afternoon in every month, commencing at 2 o'clock.